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Dear Ms. Hesse:

As a U.S. citizen living in Newfoundland and employed as a systems manager in a research department of a university, I have a keen interest in the Microsoft antitrust case. To be succinct. I believe that the complete details of the formats, including syntax and lexical interpretation, of both the data files and the network communications protocols of Microsoft products should be made public. That is the short of it.

Here is the long of it, although not very long. It is not uncommon for me to be asked by researchers, who do not happen to be using Microsoft operating systems, to help in deciphering e-mail attachments sent to them from colleagues or institutions using Microsoft products. (In fact, amazingly, there have been instances of researchers, who *do* use Microsoft operating systems, receiving e-mail text attachments and being unable to read them because they do not have the same Microsoft program that produced them.) Most often, we end up asking the sender to recreate the attachment in an open format, such as Rich Text Format, for example, for which there are available readers for non-Microsoft computer systems. On the networking side, if it were not for the existence of the Samba software (http://www.samba.org), we would have a very hard time sharing our research data among our Microsoft and non-Microsoft systems. My fear, as a systems manager of a heterogeneous facility, is that Microsoft will use the proposed terms of the settlement to make it impossible for third parties to produce open source software that will allow the fluent interchange of data between Microsoft and non-Microsoft products.

In thinking about this issue. I usually return to several situations to which almost anyone could relate. At the moment, I can pick up my phone and talk to a person anywhere in the world, regardless of the manufacturers of the phones and regardless of any fancy extensions that either phone may have. Similarly, I will be able to FAX this note to you without wondering whether the company that made your facsimile machine has so arranged things that only a FAX machine by the same company can send to yours. Again, I can make a recording on my VHS VCR and not have to concern myself with the VHS system on which it is re-played. Now, one may argue that no company would be so foolish as to create a phone that only phones of the same manufacturer can call, but, if that phone manufacturer controlled 90% of the phone market, it could well be tempted to do just such a thing.

It is my opinion that what goes on within the strict confines of a computer is up to that computer's operating system, but when the produce of that software leaves the computer, either as e-mail or a data file or a network transmission, then it has entered the public airways, so to speak, and its format should be readable by anyone on that airway. To put it in an almost ridiculously simple form, it is one thing to write a program that adds two numbers, but it is quite another to write such a program with an interface that requires that the two numbers be supplied to the program in some secret. proprietary language.

Sincerely Yours,

Anthony J. Kocurko